



**Testimony for the
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Elizabeth Beaulieu, Ph.D., VPAA
Mitchell College
March 2, 2023**

On behalf of Mitchell College, I am submitting testimony on Section 12 of [**S.B. 982: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION**](#) which seeks to make permanent our institution's exemption from academic program approval by the Office of Higher Education, without a cap on the number of programs we may introduce without approval.

By way of background, non-profit, private colleges that are regionally accredited and maintain certain standards have been exempt from academic program approval by the Office of Higher Education in some form since 2016. At times there have been caps on the number of programs that an institution which is exempt may introduce, but for the last two years eligible institutions have had no cap on the number of new programs we may introduce. This bill seeks to make permanent that existing policy.

Connecticut is one of only a handful of states that require private, non-profit colleges to seek state approval for its new programs. It is the *only* state in the country that requires program approval for private colleges and not public colleges.

It is important that Mitchell College is provided the flexibility to offer new programs without oversight to be responsive to the state's workforce needs; we are, indeed, in the process of developing several new programs that will contribute well-educated and workplace-ready graduates to the state.

Policymakers may have consumer protection concerns about this issue, given recent news related to the sudden closure of a for-profit institution in our state. It is important to understand that this statutory provision for exemption requires institutions to be regionally accredited. Mitchell College has just spent the past 18 months preparing for our decennial review by NECHE. Internal and external oversight provides assurance that no additional approval is necessary.

I urge you to make permanent the exemption from academic program approval, without cap, that is already in place and working well. Doing so will recognize the innovation, responsiveness, and growth that characterize Connecticut's private colleges and encourage further program development to benefit the state's economy.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

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